Table of Contents

1. 1.
2. 2.
3. 3.
4. 4.
5. 5.
6. 6.
7. 7.
8. 8.
9. 9.
10. 10.
11. 11.
12. 12.
13. 13.
14. 14.
15. 15.
16. 16.
17. 17.
18. 18.
19. 19.
20. 20.
21. 21.
22. 22.
23. 23.
24. 24.
25. 25.
26. 26.
27. 27.
28. 28.
29. 29.
30. 30.
31. 31.
32. 32.
33. 33.
34. 34.

35. 35.
36. 36.
37. 37.
38. 38.
39. 39.
40. 40.
41. 41.
42. 42.
43. 43.
44. 44.
45. 45.
46. 46.
47. 47.
48. 48.
49. 49.
50. 50.
51. 51.
52. 52.
53. 53.
54. 54.
55. 55.
56. 56.
57. 57.
58. 58.
59. 59.
60. 60.
61. 61.
62. 62.
63. 63.
64. 64.
65. 65.
66. 66.
67. 67.
68. 68.
69. 69.
70. 70.
71. 71.
72. 72.
73. 73.
74. 74.

75. 75.
76. 76.
77. 77.
78. 78.
79. 79.
80. 80.
81. 81.
82. 82.
83. 83.
84. 84.
85. 85.
86. 86.
87. 87.
88. 88.
89. 89.
90. 90.
91. Trivia

1.

I don't think all cats are meant to be mothers and fathers.

2.

In fact, I liked to, at one point, believe StarClan chooses their future queens with careful consideration.

3.

Even myself.

4.

I was so prepared to be a mother, I wanted nothing more than to have kits. But ... after moons and moons of trying with my mate, Beetlestripe, he, who wanted a family just as much as I, moved on with *Troutleap*.

5.

Three moons later, his kits were born. Scrappy, weak little things.

6.

Troutleap didn't like my presence in the nursery, but she knew I was no longer a warrior. I had decided to help take care of kits already in the nursery, perhaps then StarClan would realize I was worthy of my own.

7.

Another moon passed, and Toadstep joined us. Her belly didn't *look* swollen, but she looked like Troutleap when she announced her expecting.

8.

Whiskerkit, who Beetlestripe had insisted he named after myself, leaped on my tail, sticking it to the den's dusty floor with his paw. "I got the mouse!"

9.

I purred, my heart melting as his amber eyes gazed at me. "Well done."

10.

Troutleap shifted uneasily in her mossy nest, her dark tabby pelt rippling. "Whiskerkit, leave her be. She doesn't want to be bothered."

"No bother at all." This time, my purr was forced. *Can't you just let me be? I don't want to hurt him.*

11.

But I do want to hurt you.

12.

I shook the thought away, burying my muzzle in my chest and closing my eyes.

13.

Toadstep flicked her black-and-white tail back and forth as she regarded the sunlight leaking through the thick, mushed reeds. "I hear Poppynose might be having kits soon?"

My heart dropped.

14.

"Yarrowstar's mate?" Troutleap meowed, looking away from grooming Rookkit.

"That's right."

15.

Good for her.

"What do you think?" I saw Troutleap turning her gaze to me, whiskers twitching.

I think it's time I run the water red with your blood.

"Hopefully the clan sees new kits," I purred out instead.

16.

Poppynose did move into the nursery. It was all moving too fast. First Troutleap, then Toadstep, and now her. *I* should already have kits suckling at my belly.

17.

Two moons later, Poppynose and Toadstep had their kits.

18.

"You may have to move out of the nursery, Hollywhisker," Troutleap meowed. "The nursery is becoming full and we don't want our kits to bother you."

19.

Was she mocking me?

20.

"Nonsense." Poppynose lifted her head sleepily, her jaws parting in a yawn. "I rather enjoy her presence. She helps with the kits."

21.

That's it.

22.

"Troutleap, can we go stretch our legs out of Camp?" I meowed, lifting myself out of my nest.

She looks unsure, but I could also see she wanted nothing more than that, and Beetlestripe hadn't been to visit in ages. So she agreed.

23.

Foolish mistake on her part.

24.

Troutleap stretched, her muscles tensing as she did so. She yawned loudly and twitched her ears. "Thanks for bringing me out—"

25.

My unsheathed claws slit through her throat, making a wide gap for blood to gush through the wound. She collapsed in front of me, blood quickly pooling around my claws.

26.

"You stole everything from me," I snarled, watching the light begin to fade from her eyes. "You made me look like a foolish kit who is somewhere she doesn't belong. No. More."

27.

I stood in the river for some time, letting the blood wash from my black fur and white claws, then caught a couple of fish to mingle the scent of blood with.

28.

Then I dragged her body back to camp, wailing, "Fox! Fox!"

29.

The entire camp came rushing forward, many gasping and backing away at the sight of Troutleap's body at my paws.

30.

"Are you sure this was a fox?" Yarrowstar meowed, his yellow eyes narrowed. "That cut —"

31.

"I—It could have been a rogue, I don't know. I turned away to catch some fish and I heard her screech," I meowed, allowing myself to flatten out as if reliving the moment and pin my ears back.

32.

Yarrowstar blinked, his ears angling back as he turned his gaze back to Troutleap. "It would seem so. Perhaps *you* should go find Beetlestripe and let him know. He'll take it easier from you."

33.

Foxdung.

34.

Beetlestripe pushed past me when I told him, soaking my coat with chilly water.

35.

Yet, even when I saw his amber eyes grow with shock, pain, and disbelief, I couldn't find myself remorseful.

36.

The elders and queens prepared Troutleap's body for vigil. I collected the rosemary rather slowly.

37.

Poppynose and Toadstep now suckled her kits.

38.

I felt unsatisfied. I wanted *more* cats to feel my pain. How is it that they had kits while I was stuck barren and kitless?

39.

Beetlestripe moved on rather quickly. When his kits were made apprentices, another she-cat moved into the nursery, belly full of his kits. *Of course.*

40.

My claws itched, and I felt the sudden urge. "Toadstep lets go fishing!" I meowed, leaping to my paws. "Lilykit and Mistkit are old enough to be left without you for a few moments!"

41.

"Perhaps we should bring a warrior," Toadstep fretted. "We don't want to get hurt or ... worse, like Troutleap."

42.

You shouldn't be worried. The only threat to you is myself.

43.

I led Toadstep upstream, to the best fishing spot, and the most dangerous. We fished for a while, and then I turned my gaze to her. "Toadstep watch out!" I screeched.

44.

The black-and-white queen shot up, but my paw slammed down and forced her head on a rock. The slam was hard enough to kill her.

45.

But she wasn't dead.

46.

Yet.

47.

She reached a paw out but I sharply held it down, digging my claws into her skin. "Toadstep, you need help," I meowed frantically, fur bristling. "But you won't get it."

48.

I watched as the light left her yellow eyes.

49.

I saw a patrol male their way up and I screeched, acting frantic and scared. "Mousepelt! Littlefish! Help!" I wailed, slipping and purposely falling into slick pebbles.

50.

I saw a patrol male their way up and I screeched, acting frantic and scared. "Mousepelt! Littlefish! Help!" I wailed, slipping and purposely falling into slick pebbles.

51.

The cats rushed over, seeing my distress.

"Hollywhisker? What happened?"

52.

"T-Todstep ... fishing .." I choked out, looking back at the dead Toadstep and inwardly purring with triumph. "She slipped! The rocks ..."

53.

Littlefish flattened her brown ears. "That's the third cat to die here."

Exactly why I chose this spot.

"Poor thing. That's the second time she's seen her friends die ... " the brown cat murmured, brushing against me. "Come along. Let's take you to Mossflower. She'll give you some poppy and thyme."

54.

Beetlewhisker rushed up to me after hearing the news, pressing his muzzle to my shoulder. "Are you okay?"

55.

I opened my jaws to respond, but Mossflower gently nudged the tom aside. "She needs herbs for shock."

Beetlestripe lingered behind, the fur along his spine prickled. "Hollywhisker ... "

I clawed the nest under my paws. "Go comfort Streamtail. She was Toadstep's littermate."

56.

Beetlestripe hesitated, then backed out to go find his pregnant mate. Mossflower nudged the herbs toward me. "Go on, then."

57.

"Mossflower?" I meowed, releasing the nest from my claws and tucking my paws under my chest.

58.

The medicine cat turned toward me, her blue eyes flashing with question. "Yes?"

"Does it bother you that you can't have kits?"

59.

Her eyes softened. Mossflower knew too well this subject and what it meant to me, and she padded back over. "Is this what's been bothering you?"

I blinked. "How did you —"

"I can sense when a cat is sulking and when one is having issues with her health because of it," she meowed. "Does staying in the nursery help?"

60.

"The kits do," I admitted, shuffling my paws and lowering my head. "But it only helps for so long."

61.

"No, it doesn't bother me that I cannot have kits," the medicine cat eventually meowed. I felt her tail-tip graze my flank gently. "Perhaps StarClan will answer your blessing one day."

62.

I respected Mossflower, but I could not agree with her on this. "Perhaps."

63.

I exited the den that night, only to be met by Yarrowstar. His yellow gaze flashed at me and he tilted his head. "How do you feel?"

64.

My gaze flicked to the body of Toadstep neatly prepared for vigil behind him and then averted my gaze to his. "I'm still in shock."

65.

The sandy-golden tom narrowed his eyes at me, flicking his tail back and forth. "I'm sorry you've had to experience so much grief in the last few moons. Hopefully things will begin to turn for you."

66.

His ears flicked when I didn't respond, and he turned. "Let all those old enough to fish gather!" he called.

67.

What in StarClan's name is he doing?

68.

Yarrowstar looked me in the eye and meows to the clan, "Hollywhisker, step forward."

69.

I hissed low, doing as told with my fur prickling. "Yes?"

70.

"With Toadstep's untimely death, Poppynose's kits, Heronflight's recent move into the nursery with Beetlestripe's kits, and now Dawnwing's entrance soon enough, I believe it is time for you to move back to your warrior duties."

71.

No!

72.

I opened my jaws to defend myself, but Poppynose pushed forward. "Now wait just a moment, Yarrowstar," she growled up at her mate, her usually kind green eyes flaming.

73.

Yarrowstar narrowed his eyes down at his mate. "What is it?"

"Hollywhisker is extremely good with all the kits. I speak for Toadstep and Troutleap when I say that she's better as a camp queen. Especially when more kits are on the way," she meowed, brushing herself against me.

74.

Why are you helping me? Why aren't you picking up on Yarrowstar's suspicions?

75.

"Yes." Beetlestripe stepped forward. "She loves being with kits, too, don't take that away from her."

76.

You're next, Beetlestripe.

77.

I was granted permission to stay in the nursery, mostly because the other cats felt sorry for me. They knew I could produce kits.

78.

I asked Beetlestripe if we could talk. He blinked and followed me out of Camp, his fur brushing against mine. "What is it?"

79.

I shuffled my black paws. I felt the need to tell him I had killed our Clanmates.

"I killed them."

80.

He gave me an odd, confused look. "What?"

81.

"I said, I killed them," I meowed. "Troutleap and Toadstep." *And you're going to be next.*

82.

His ears flattened and he backed away. "What? No, you wouldn't," he meowed, pelt sticking on end. "This isn't funny."

83.

"I would hope not," I responded dryly, twitching my ear. My claws slid out. "Now don't make a noise."

84.

"No–" my claws dug into his chest as I lunged forward, wrapping my jaws around his throat and holding him down. I watched as he struggled for air, feeling my heart hum with approval

85.

"H-Hollywhisker?" I whipped around, dropping Beetlestripe's dead body.

Rookpaw.

86.

Rookpaw ... I'm so sorry. But now I have to kill you, too.

87.

. . .

88.

I didn't see the patrol of warriors standing above me as I broke Rookpaw's windpipe between my jaws and felt the warm spill of blood down my neck.

89.

And then I felt no more.

90.

It's so dark, and cold, and wet. I want to go home now.

"But you are home," the darkness around me seemed to whisper.

F I N

Trivia

• The setting is RiverClan

• Mossflower is Hollywhisker's aunt through her mother

• Hollywhisker is a black, short-furred cat with green eyes

• Beetlestripe is a red-and-white classic tabby

• 'Rook' is my favorite prefix and 'Whisker' is my favorite suffix.

• I almost let Hollywhisker get away with her murders, but Yarrowstar's suspicion in the plot was too strong, hence why the patrol found her with Rookpaw — his suspicion got the best of him.

• Hollywhisker is infertile

• Hollywhisker is in the Dark Forest

• Toadstep and Troutleap forgave Hollywhisker, but they don't respect her anymore.

• I almost made Hollywhisker suffer from hysterical pregnancy